

Old Witch

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Old Witch

Author's note: Story is set in the middle of "Batman and Robin."

Heading around a corner, Dick Grayson didn't notice the girl who was heading in the opposite direction until he bumped into her, scattering her parcels all over the sidewalk. "Oh, sorry," he said, trying to help her up.

"Thanks." She brushed herself off and started to pick up her packages. "You should slow down, or at least watch where you're going." She had stringy blond hair and green cat eyes.

"I'm kind of in a hurry to get away from here," Dick explained.

"Oh." The girl nodded and picked up the last package. "Why?"

"I just had a big fight with my...dad. He doesn't let me do anything on my own. I have to depend on him for everything."

"I know how that feels. I had to depend on my aunt for everything, until she finally let me go on my own. She said that if I was so bent on being independent, I might as well go off and live on my own. Besides, I had just turned thirteen. Most witches go off on their own around that time." The girl shrugged.

"Wait. You're a witch?" Dick wasn't sure he had heard correctly.

The girl stared at him. "Yes, I am a witch. I'm not that good at it, though. My aunt is still teaching me. When I turn twenty-one, then I'll be able to join a coven. Until then, I can't do anything really

useful."

"What kind of stuff can you do?" asked Dick.

"Oh, little things. Glamours, love spells, and I can levitate if I concentrate really hard. Not anything really good. My name is Jenya, by the way."

"Oh. I'm Dick Grayson." Dick held out his hand.

Jenya shook it. "Nice to meet you."

They walked along for a little while, talking. Dick told Jenya about the fights he had with Bruce Wayne, about how Bruce didn't let him do anything on his own, and how if he tried to, Bruce would threaten to kick him out.

When he told Jenya about that, she just shook her head. "If you want to be independent from him, my aunt could cast a spell for that. You don't have to pay money, either."

"Really? Where does your aunt live?"

"She keeps a shop on the other side of the city. It's on the corner of 53rd and Craft Street. It has a pentagram on the window and there's a mezuzzah on the door."

"A what?" Dick had never heard of a pentagram or a mezuzzah.

"A pentagram is a circle drawn around a star. A mezuzzah looks like an glass cylinder with an iron frame. At least my aunt's does. It's a Jewish sign of protection, but my aunt uses it in case any witch-hunters come around. There are still some people who hunt witches, you know."

"I didn't know that."

"Most people don't." They stopped in front of an apartment building. "Here's my house. Thanks for coming with me." Jenya went up the stairs and disappeared through the door.

"Bye," called Dick. He decided to visit Jenya's aunt as soon as possible.

"Okay, 53rd and Craft Street. Mezuzzah on the door, pentagram in the window. This is the place." Dick Grayson looked at the shabby building in front of him. "It's now or never."

He pushed open the door. A bell attached to the door tolled as he stepped in.

An old woman was sitting at a table. "You're Dick Grayson, aren't you?" she asked.

"Um, yeah," said Dick. "How'd you know?"

The woman smiled. "Jenya told me about you. She said you would probably be coming here tonight."

"Oh. Look, can youâ€"

"Yes," the old witch interrupted. "You need to be independent from Bruce Wayne. He takes care of you, but he does not allow you to make decisions on your own. Wherever you go, you are stuck as his sidekick. Is that correct?"

"How did you know?" asked Dick, surprised.

The old witch smiled. "In my coven, I was known as the keeper of secrets. Sit down. We will discuss your spell."

Dick sat down carefully in an old wooden chair that looked as if it was about to break.

"Now," said the witch. "You want to not have to depend on Bruce Wayne for things anymore. You don't want to have to need to get everything from him. Is that correct?"

"Yes, that's correct."

"Good. I can give you that much." The witch nodded.

"How much does it cost?" asked Dick.

"Four days of your life. Four days will be taken off of the end of your life and given to me. It's not much to ask."

Dick thought. Four days in return for freedom. Half a week in return for complete independence from Bruce Wayne—forever. "What's the catch?" "No catch. It's not a long time. You will just die four days earlier."

"How will I die, then?"

The old witch looked off into space. "If you had not come here, you would have been kissed by death."

"By Poison Ivy," Dick realized. "This will go on longer than I thought."

"Yes," said the old witch. "Do you still want to go on with the spell?"

"I want to," said Dick.

"Good." The witch produced a pin with a flick of her wrist, and a piece of paper out of thin air. She grabbed a fountain pen and a golden inkwell and wrote on the paper.

"Here," she said when she was done. She gave the paper to Dick.

The contract read:

By this bind, Dick Grayson shall give four days of his life to (unreadable) in return for complete independence from Bruce Wayne. This trade shall be complete at midnight three days from now. Dick Grayson will not instigate the fulfilling of this document, but shall wait for it to happen to him. Signed,

The old witch pricked Dick on his finger and squeezed three drops of

his blood into the inkwell. "Sign it and it will be complete."

Dick dipped the pen into the inkwell. He put the pen to paper, and wrote his name.

"There. That is all you need to do. I will cast the spell at midnight three days from now." The old witch took back the paper and rolled it up. "Go and good luck." "Thanks." Dick got up and walked out.

Three days later...

Batman and Robin were fighting Mr. Freeze. Batman was in his Batmobile, Robin was on his Redbird. Mr. Freeze's car jumped from one statue's open hand to its closed fist. Batman gunned the motor on the Batmobile, preparing to jump. He turned on the intercom to the Redbird.

"Robin, don't try to make this jump," he commanded his sidekick.

Robin's voice came back. "I can make it."

"No you can't and don't try. The Redbird isn't fast enough."

"I can make it!" Robin insisted. He turned off the intercom.

Batman pressed down hard on the gas pedal of the Batmobile. Robin watched. Was the Batmobile going to crash? That would certainly mean his independence.

To his dismay, nothing happened. The Batmobile made the jump and landed safely.

Batman glanced back to where the Redbird was still going. Was Robin still trying to make the jump? He reached over to turn off the power to the Redbird...

He was a second too late. Robin cleared the area between the gigantic hands. As he felt the wheels of the Redbird touch metal, he grinned.

His elation didn't last long. His bike skidded on an icy patch and flipped over the side of the hand, taking him with it.

The old witch cheated me! he thought furiously. I only had a week to live and she took four days of it!

Then he realized he had gotten just what he wanted. She hadn't cheated after all, just given him what he asked for.

Because when you're dead, you don't depend on anybody.

End
file.